

Chapter 20

Boulder

“Evil on this scale is impossible to comprehend. To know who murdered JonBenét Ramsey is to know what world we live in.”

—James R. Gaines, *Time*, January 20, 1997

In death, she looked more like the six-year-old child that she was than she had in many of the photos taken of her when she was alive. Her lifeless body was found lying on a cold basement floor, wrapped in a blanket. A strip of duct tape purportedly covered her mouth. Her right wrist, raised above her head, was loosely bound with a length of cord. The same type cord was wrapped around her neck, with a broken paintbrush handle taken from her mother’s art supplies fashioned into a makeshift garrote.

To some investigators, her bindings looked staged.

She was dressed in a sweatshirt that covered a long-sleeved undershirt. White pajama bottoms covered her white panties, which an autopsy report later revealed were stained with blood. Inspection with a blacklight indicated that there was semen on both of her thighs, but the medial examiner would make no mention of that in his report.

To some investigators, it looked as though she had been ‘re-dressed’ after her death.

She had been sexually abused, severely beaten about the head—causing a massive skull fracture—and then strangled to death. Rigor mortis had fully set in and police on the scene reported the smell of decomposition. She had undigested food in her stomach and small intestine, identified as pieces of pineapple. On the palm of her left hand was drawn a small red heart. Around her neck was a chain bearing a crucifix. On her wrist was a bracelet; engraved on one side was her

name, JonBenét Ramsey, and on the other, the probable date of her death: December 25, 1996.

The previous evening, JonBenét had attended a party at the home of family friends with her parents, John and Patsy,⁴¹ and her brother Burke. The Ramsey family had returned home at 9:30 PM, by which time JonBenét had fallen asleep. She was carried inside and put to bed, allegedly last seen alive at around 10:00 PM. Patsy Ramsey claims that she woke up the next morning sometime after 5:00 AM and headed down the back stairs, which were generally used only by those who were familiar with the house. There she found a ransom note that she quickly read before entering her daughter's room to find that the child was missing.⁴² At 5:52 AM, she placed a frantic 911 call. It was later realized that Burke Ramsey's voice could be heard on the recording of that call, although John and Patsy steadfastly maintain that Burke was not yet up from bed when the call was placed.

Boulder police arrived at the Ramsey home seven minutes later to find Patsy hysterical, and John collected, but pacing. This was the second time in just three days that a 911 call had been placed from the Ramsey home. The first was on the night of December 23, during a party attended by an estimated 100 guests drawn

41 John Ramsey is the son of a WWII pilot who later served as the director of the Michigan Aeronautics Commission, where he was known, certainly not affectionately, as "Czar" Ramsey. John himself served as a Naval officer and pilot in the Philippines in the late 1960s. He later formed a company that he named Access Graphics. That company later became a subsidiary of Lockheed-Martin, one of the nation's largest military/intelligence contractors. After the buyout, John served as the company's president and CEO. His vice-president of operations was Donald Paugh, his father-in-law and a former Union Carbide engineer. Patsy, a former beauty queen, was the oldest of Paugh's three daughters. A *Miss America* pageant judge once described her as "a little automaton." In his book on the Ramsey case, Cyril Wecht described the Paugh family as "insular, like a closed society unto itself. Nedra [Patsy's mother] appeared to exert extraordinary influence over her adult daughters." John Ramsey also exerted considerable influence over one of her adult daughters.

42 That is the version of events that Patsy Ramsey has long held to. By her initial account, however, she discovered the disappearance *before* finding the note.

from the elite of Boulder society. The guest list for that party has never been made public, nor has the reason for the first 911 call.⁴³

The first officers to arrive at the Ramsey home were presented with the purported ransom note: two-and-a-half hand-written pages of bizarre ramblings that were withheld from the press and the public for nine months. The note's authors demanded a ransom of exactly \$118,000 in cash, which happened to be the amount of the Christmas bonus that John had just received. They claimed, rather preposterously, that they represented a "small foreign faction." They warned that if their demands were not met, JonBenét would be decapitated. The Ramseys were instructed to expect a telephone call that very morning between 8:00 and 10:00 AM, but that call, of course, never came.

For reasons that have never been adequately explained, the investigation was compromised from the very beginning. Officers inexplicably failed to secure the crime scene, allowing the family's pastor and a number of friends to freely come and go from the home. No effort was made to prevent contamination of any potential evidence. Detectives did not arrive on the scene until 8:10 AM, over two hours after the first patrol officers arrived. It took another twelve hours for the coroner to arrive (and once there, he reportedly spent just ten minutes examining the body and the crime scene). At around 10:00 AM, detectives allowed John Ramsey to leave the house unescorted for over an hour. He was purportedly on a mission to pick up the mail, although it is unclear why such a trivial errand had such a sense of urgency at a time of family crisis. It is also unclear why it took John so long to complete the errand and why he chose to go alone when several family friends were available to accompany him.

43 One man who is known to have attended is Bill McReynolds, who played Santa Claus for the event. On December 26, 1974, exactly twenty-two years before the murder of JonBenét, Bill's own daughter had purportedly been abducted, along with a friend, from the McReynolds' home not far from Boulder. The girl was released unharmed, after being forced to witness an assault on her friend. There were no arrests made and no charges were ever filed. Not long after that, Bill's wife Janet wrote a screenplay, entitled *Hey Rube*, that concerned the abduction, torture and murder of a young girl whose battered body is discovered lying on a cold basement floor. When Bill McReynolds was extended an invitation to speak at JonBenét's memorial service, he used the opportunity to share memories of not just the slain beauty queen but of a few other kids with whom, bizarrely, he had been close before their untimely deaths. The Ramseys considered McReynolds one of their prime suspects—along with 160+ other people whose names appeared on their self-serving suspect list.

One of the most grievous, and baffling, errors committed by detectives was their failure to separate the Ramseys for questioning. Even though detectives had Patsy alone for over an hour, while John was running his errand, no one purportedly thought to question her. Just as baffling is the fact that there was no initial search of the house, by either the family or police. When a detective on the scene finally suggested, at 1:00 PM, that it might be a good idea to conduct a search, it had been nearly eight hours since the family had first discovered the disappearance, seven hours since police had arrived on the scene, and five hours since detectives had arrived, *and yet no one had thought to search the home*. Are we really to believe that after finding the ‘ransom’ note, the family immediately accepted that their beloved daughter had been taken from the home? What parent would not first conduct a room-by-room search of the house before accepting that eventuality? Indeed, what parent would not search the house repeatedly, in the desperate hope that, somehow, something had been overlooked during an earlier search?

Amazingly enough, when it finally occurred to police that it might be a good idea to search the crime scene, they assigned that task to the prime suspect, John Ramsey. Joining John was good friend Fleet White, an oil company executive who had hosted the party the Ramseys attended the previous evening, and who the Ramseys placed a call to immediately after placing the 911 call. Ramsey and White quickly headed to the basement, where they almost immediately found JonBenét’s body, demonstrating in doing so that no effort had previously been made to look for the missing girl (although White later claimed that he had checked the basement earlier and saw nothing out of the ordinary).

John Ramsey promptly picked up his lifeless daughter and removed the tape from her mouth (strangely though, the autopsy report later made no mention of tape residue around JonBenét’s mouth). He then carried her upstairs and laid her on the floor. Patsy Ramsey immediately collapsed on the body of her child. A detective then moved the corpse and covered it with a blanket. In the space of just a few minutes, some of the most crucial evidence in the case had been hopelessly contaminated.

Ann Louise Bardach, writing for *Vanity Fair*, quoted one officer’s recollections of John and Patsy’s reactions to the discovery of the body: “What was interesting was when [John] Ramsey brought the body upstairs he never cried. But when he laid her down, he started to moan, while peering around to see who was looking.” Patsy, he said, “peer[ed] at him through splayed fingers” while making sobbing sounds. The officer described being haunted by the manner in which Patsy kept staring at him. He also noted that he never saw either of the Ramseys attempt to comfort or console the other.

The glaring incongruity of finding both a ransom note *and* the body of the purported kidnapping victim, coupled with what was viewed by many as inappropriate

behavior by the Ramseys, seemed to indicate that the crime was something other than a botched kidnapping. The preponderance of the evidence did not support the idea that an intruder was to blame. No footprints were observed outside of the home, even though snow covered much (but not all) of the ground. There were no signs of forced entry. The ransom note most likely originated from within the house. The pages appeared to have been torn from the Ramseys' own legal pad, and a pen found in a cup in the kitchen was likely the writing instrument. According to some reports, the first page in the legal pad, which was still attached, contained what appeared to be a false start at writing the ransom note.

The unlikely scenario that we are asked to believe is that an intruder entered an occupied home seeking a victim to abduct, but he then inadvertently killed his intended victim, at which time he decided to hide the body in the basement, assuming that it wouldn't be found. He then searched the house for pen and paper before composing both an unfinished draft and a final ransom note, the latter of which rambled on at some length.

The room where the body was found was in an out-of-the-way area of the spacious home's basement. Only a family member would have likely known of its existence. John Ramsey acknowledged that fact in a *CNN* interview: "the room that we found her in is kind of a remote part of the basement." "A casual guest would not know where that room is," Patsy added. "It's, you know, kind of out-of-the-way." Despite that early acknowledgement by the Ramseys themselves, the Ramsey spin team later vociferously denied that the room would have been difficult to locate for someone other than a family member.

Steve Thomas, the lead detective on the case, concluded that Patsy Ramsey wrote the ransom note. He contends that of the 74 suspects whose handwriting samples were reviewed by investigators, Patsy was the only one that could not be excluded as a suspect. He has also accused her of deliberately changing some elements of her writing style after the murder, in order to disguise her authorship of the note.

Several days after the discovery of JonBenét's body, the Ramsey family flew her remains to Atlanta, their former home, for burial. Services were held on New Years Eve, after which JonBenét was laid to rest next to her half-sister Elizabeth, another of John Ramsey's daughters. The following day, John and Patsy made their infamous appearance on *CNN*, even while steadfastly claiming to be too grief-stricken to talk to the police. Patsy was heavily sedated, and had been since the day of the murder. She later claimed that she was unable to remember anything that occurred during the weeks immediately following the discovery of the body. Burke Ramsey was reportedly kept heavily drugged after his sister's death as well.

Allegations of prior abuse of the victim soon began to circulate in the media. Video footage of JonBenét's pageant appearances was aired endlessly. The footage offered no proof of the abuse allegations, but it did clearly demonstrate that the

Ramseys had unconscionably marketed their offspring as some kind of hyper-sexualized woman-child.

There was, however, certainly nothing unusual about that on the kiddie pageant circuit, as author Stephen Singular discovered when he ventured into that milieu. What he discovered is a world that few outside of the pageant circuit are familiar with: a world where extraordinarily young girls have had their hair dyed, their teeth capped, their young faces sculpted by plastic surgeons, their chests bunched-up with tape to form the appearance of cleavage, and their eye color enhanced with contact lenses. Singular also discovered that photographing these pre-pubescent beauty queens in risqué poses is a routine business undertaken by some of the most highly regarded child photographers in the country. JonBenét Ramsey was just one of an estimated 250,000 girls who are a part of this billion-dollar-a-year business that, by all appearances, caters primarily to the pedophilic tendencies of the adults who gravitate around the 3,000 child beauty pageants held every year.

While JonBenét's longtime involvement in the child pageant business raises a number of questions, it does not directly answer the question of whether she had been molested either on the night of her death or before that time. The autopsy report, which was released in a severely redacted form on February 14 and in full on August 13, made mention of chronic genital inflammation, foreign matter in the vagina, and "epithelial erosion." A detective working the case swore in an affidavit that the coroner, John Meyer, told her that someone had definitely had sexual contact with the child. Meyer drew no such conclusions in his report.

Independent experts who have examined the evidence have been far less circumspect. Dr. Robert Kirschner of the University of Chicago's pathology department noted that JonBenét's vaginal opening was twice what is normal for a girl her age. He also stated that the "genital injuries indicate penetration, but probably not by a penis, and are evidence of molestation that night as well as previous molestation." Dr. Cyril Wecht, one of the most respected forensic pathologists in the country, told an interviewer: "This to me is evidence of sexual abuse. I think any forensic gynecologist and forensic pathologist would agree with that...If she had been taken to a hospital emergency room, and doctors had seen the genital evidence, her father would have been arrested."

There was one doctor who had numerous opportunities to observe that evidence. As was widely reported, JonBenét had been taken to her pediatrician no fewer than twenty-seven times in the previous three to four years. The doctor claimed, rather disingenuously, that that was a normal rate of visitation for a child her age. He also claimed that he had never seen, during any of those visits, any evidence of abuse. That claim, however, was contradicted by the forensic evidence, which indicated chronic abuse.

Cellmark Diagnostics in Germantown, Maryland, the CIA-linked forensic lab that was thrust into the national limelight during the OJ Simpson trial, was unable to return any conclusive findings from any of the biological materials it received on the case. A number of other OJ players surfaced in Buffalo as well. Criminologist Henry Lee was hired on as a forensics adviser to District Attorney Alex Hunter.⁴⁴ DNA wunderkinds Barry Scheck and Peter Neufeld joined the party as well. Oddly enough, with all the DNA all-stars on board, no DNA evidence has ever been produced in the case.

From the beginning, when a gag order was placed on the officers working the case, there have been concerted efforts made to control the flow of information that the public has received about the murder of JonBenét Ramsey. Largely responsible for shaping public perception of the case has been the law firm retained almost immediately by the Ramseys: Haddon, Morgan, Mueller, George, Mackey & Foreman.⁴⁵ The tentacles of Hal Haddon's firm seemed to reach into every nook and cranny of the Ramsey case.

44 Alex Hunter, the man primarily responsible for prosecuting the JonBenét Ramsey murder case, had been Boulder's District Attorney since 1972. During his tenure, he developed a reputation for extremely lenient enforcement of drug laws, making the city a particularly friendly place for narcotics traffickers. Since 1969, Hunter had been a limited partner in a business enterprise with a lawyer named William Gray, who just happened to be John Ramsey's civil attorney.

45 The powerful firm has, as Cyril Wecht noted, "deep connections to the Democratic power structure that control[s] state politics" in Colorado. Hal Haddon was the manager of Gary Hart's successful U.S. Senate campaigns as well as his unsuccessful presidential bid. Haddon also has close ties to District Attorney Alex Hunter and former Governors Roy Romer and Richard Lamm. A *Los Angeles Times* report from August 2003 describes his firm as having "a long history of handling high profile cases and getting charges either dismissed outright or dramatically reduced. In cases where clients have been found guilty, they have often been able to get sentences drastically cut." The *Times* cites as an example the case of Rockwell International Corporation's Rocky Flats nuclear weapons plant, which was raided by federal agents who discovered "widespread and egregious environmental contamination. Radioactive waste was being illegally dumped into rivers, fields and released into the atmosphere." Despite the fact that the evidence against the company was overwhelming, no company officials were ever charged in the case, which was settled with Rockwell paying a nominal fine. In 1990, Haddon represented 'gonzo' journalist Hunter S. Thompson, who was facing sexual assault charges. The charges against Thompson were dropped. Curiously, Thompson has been accused by witnesses in the Franklin case of being a producer of child snuff films. He now pens a column entitled *Hey Rube*.

Patsy Ramsey was represented by Haddon partners Patrick Furman and Patrick Burke. Burke was perhaps best known for having won acquittal for the white supremacist accused of killing Denver radio personality Alan Berg. Throughout the Ramsey investigation, he was frequently seen in the doorway of what was dubbed the 'JonBenét War Room,' often chatting with Peter Hofstrom, an assistant to District Attorney Hunter, and Tripp DeMuth, one Hunter's prosecutors on the case. John Ramsey was represented by partners Bryan Morgan and Lee Foreman. Morgan, who had once been nominated to serve as a justice on the Colorado Supreme Court, was regularly seen holding breakfast meetings with his old friend, Peter Hofstrom. Burke Ramsey was represented by yet another member of the Haddon team.

The Boulder Police Department, led by Chief Tom Koby,⁴⁶ took the unusual step of retaining its own representatives, in the form of a trio of private practice attorneys. One of the three, Robert Miller, had recently teamed with Haddon on a civil suit. Another of the trio, Daniel Hoffman, had previously been defended in a malpractice suit by Haddon partner Lee Foreman.

In addition to the legal firepower, the Ramseys also hired a professional spokesman. Filling that post was Washington spin-meister Patrick Korten, who had served in the Reagan Administration as the consultant for the Office of Personnel Management at the time that striking air traffic controllers were fired, and as the chief spokesman for the outrageously corrupt Ed Meese-run Justice Department. Also on Korten's résumé were stints serving as mouthpieces for Iran/Contra conspirator Oliver North and for the Pharmaceutical Research Manufacturers of America.

Another addition to the Ramsey spin team was premier FBI profiler John Douglas. One of his former colleagues, Gregg McCrary, was also approached to join the team, but he declined the offer—after offering the opinion that the murder looked to him like a "staged domestic homicide." Also on the Ramsey team were two private investigation firms whose gumshoes reportedly interviewed nearly every witness approached by Boulder police. Rounding out the team was a retired homicide investigator named Lou Smit, whose claim to fame was having

46 Before coming to Boulder, Chief Koby had served as a deputy chief, and then as assistant chief, of the Houston Police Department. His chief and mentor in Houston had been Lee P. Brown, who later became the chief of the NYPD and then served in Washington as the federal 'drug czar.' Before relocating to Houston, Brown had served as Police Commissioner for the city of Atlanta, at the very time that the so-called 'child murders' rocked that city (see next chapter).

purportedly solved the murder of Karen Grammar, the sister of actor and accused pedophile Kelsey Grammar.

Smit was brought out of retirement by District Attorney Hunter, ostensibly to assist in gathering evidence *against* the Ramseys. Strangely enough though, he resigned a year-and-a-half later and went to work *for* the Ramseys. When he switched sides, he brought with him a full accounting of all the state's evidence in the case, which, truth be told, the Ramseys had access to all along anyway. Boulder police loudly complained that Hunter repeatedly shared information with the Ramseys, even going so far as to supply the couple, before their being questioned by police, with copies of police reports and of their initial statements to investigators. John and Patsy were, therefore, able to insure that their stories remained consistent with both the known facts and with their prior alibis.

To their credit, it appears that at least some of the officers on Boulder's police force (which had a healthy distrust of Hunter and his sidekick Smit) attempted to honestly investigate the case. Their efforts were impeded, however, by not only the District Attorney's office, but by the Denver Police Department and the FBI. Local officials resisted, unsuccessfully, the involvement of both agencies. In April 1997, Boulder police abruptly stopped sharing information with Hunter's office. Shortly after that, the computer containing the Ramsey case files in the aforementioned 'War Room' was hacked into by persons unknown. That same month, John and Patsy Ramsey submitted to their first formal police interviews, four full months after JonBenét had been laid to rest. The date of the interviews was, appropriately enough, April 30, 1997: *Walpurgisnacht*.

On that very same day, a man named James Michael Thompson, who worked for a private company that specialized in transporting corpses, stole two pages from the morgue book at Boulder Community Hospital. Those two pages had recorded the arrival of JonBenét's body four months earlier. On May 21, Thompson was charged with the theft of the pages. He was also charged with abuse of corpses, those charges arising from his macabre habit of grotesquely posing the corpses in his charge. On June 18, the very same James Michael Thompson attempted to burn down the Ramsey home. Patsy had reportedly expressed a desire that the house be destroyed, and had vowed that she would never return there. Officials predictably announced that Thompson's actions had no connection to the murder of JonBenét.

June also marked the beginning of the crumbling of the local political structure in Boulder, Colorado. City Manager Tim Honey was the first casualty. Before long, a third of the city's council members had left office, the mayor had decided to move on, the head of the Chamber of Commerce had left office, and Police Chief Tom Koby and Police Commander John Eller had both opted to step down. In his book on the case, Stephen Singular states, without elaboration:

“Numerous powerful people had been in the Ramsey’s home and had been exposed to JonBenét.” Many of those powerful people were in the Ramsey home just two days before JonBenét’s death, on the night that the first 911 call was placed. It is very unlikely that any of those people will ever be named, but it is quite possible that some of them were public officials who opted to step away from the limelight.

* * * *

What really happened to JonBenét Ramsey on that fateful day in 1996? And why did the case become such a *cause célèbre*? After all, the killing of a child in this country is certainly not an uncommon occurrence, nor is it normally an event deemed worthy of national media attention. As the *Village Voice* reported in 1997, the United States has, per capita, the highest rate of child homicide in the world. None of the world’s people slaughter their children more frequently, or more cavalierly, than do Americans.⁴⁷ With the notable exceptions of the occasional Polly Klaas or Adam Walsh, few of these murder victims are deemed worthy of anything approaching a full-scale media circus.

What then are we to make of the JonBenét Ramsey case? The family would like you believe that it was nothing more than a badly botched kidnapping plot. That hardly seems likely, however. The kidnapping scenario was most likely conceived after the fact, to cover up the accidental or intentional death of the child. The plan probably called for the body to be disposed of and the disappearance blamed on an unknown abductor. For whatever reason though, the body could not be disposed of. When it became apparent that a search would quickly yield the girl’s remains, John Ramsey made sure that he was the one to make the discovery, thereby compromising the crime scene and nullifying any forensic evidence linking him to the body. None of that, of course, answers the question of *why* JonBenét Ramsey was killed.

One theory holds that Patsy Ramsey killed JonBenét in a fit of rage resulting from a bedwetting incident. While that scenario is not necessarily “absurd,” as the Ramseys have labeled it, it does seem to fall short of adequately explaining the crime. Another theory holds that John Ramsey killed JonBenét accidentally when

47 America’s closest ally, the United Kingdom, seems to have its sights set on catching up. In January 2002, the *Independent* reported that a “record number of children [were] murdered in Britain last year.” The rate of child homicides had risen 40% in just one year. England’s child homicide rate is now “thought to be the highest in Europe.”

his ongoing abuse got out of hand. While that is probably closer to the truth, it still appears to fall short of providing a full explanation. Stephan Singular has put forth a more disturbing theory: he believes that JonBenét was killed because of her involvement in a child pornography and prostitution ring. Singular theorizes that one of the parents was involved, essentially acting as a pimp in selling the young girl to the ring. The cover-up of her death took place, according to Singular, when the guilty party had to conceal that fact from the other parent, who was not involved.

While Singular is on the right track, his analysis still probably falls a little short of the mark. The truth likely is that *both* of the Ramseys were involved in pimping their daughter out to other pedophiles. The massive cover-up that has shrouded the investigation from day one is indicative of the type of systemic corruption that leads to these types of cases being routinely covered up. Such a far-reaching effort certainly could not have been orchestrated by one parent working to fool the other.

Rumors of child pornography have surrounded the case from the earliest days of the investigation. Police records indicate that warrants were sought to search the Ramsey home for pornographic materials. The *San Jose Mercury News* reported that police investigators “had a strong initial suspicion that someone in the family had an interest in child pornography...three days after the girl’s bludgeoned body was discovered in the basement of her family’s upscale home, Boulder, Colo. police seized computers, computer disks, CD-ROMs, and video and still photography equipment, according to the search warrants.” At least 150 videotapes were seized from the home. It was also alleged that John Ramsey had been seen frequenting a seedy Denver porno shop. In the tabloid press, it was reported that the computers at Access Graphics were loaded with child pornography. While the credibility of that story may be in dispute,⁴⁸ it is interesting to note that after the murder, Access Graphics added guards and greatly increased security at its headquarters.

A California woman recently presented to Boulder police—through her therapist—information that she claimed to have about the case. The therapist, Mary Bienkowski, spoke of a pedophile ring operating in the Boulder area. She identified her client of ten years as a past victim of the ring, which she said had direct links to the Ramsey family. She also said that her client had provided police with

48 There is a possibility that the story was dumped in the tabloid press for the express purpose of discrediting it. *Konformist* editor Robert Sterling and others have noted that the tabloid press is frequently used to taint stories that are threatening to break in more respectable avenues of the media.

the names of several people who had witnessed the murder of JonBenét. Bienkowski also claimed that the witness had provided evidence of the ongoing abuse of other children. The unidentified witness was interviewed by agents of the FBI. Shortly after that, she went into hiding, afraid for her life. The Boulder Sheriff's office portrayed the woman as a crank, claiming that she had a history of making false reports. The woman, however, maintained that while she had indeed made previous reports, they were not *false* reports, but rather *uninvestigated* reports. There is no indication that the leads she supplied on the Ramsey case were ever investigated.

Could such a ring have existed in Boulder? And if so, could that have provided the hidden subtext of the JonBenét Ramsey murder? Conclusive evidence is hard to come by, but a few tantalizing bits and pieces have surfaced.

Randy Simons was considered the best, and the most expensive, child photographer in the Boulder area. At least one pageant mother reported to author Singular that Simons had approached her about shooting nudes of her daughter. She declined the offer. How many pageant mothers consented to such offers is unknown. In June 1996, just months before JonBenét's death, Simons took what were described as 'cover-girl' shots of the oft-photographed beauty queen (who on several occasions had been photographed with Daphne White, her best friend and the daughter of Fleet White).

Just after JonBenét's death, Simons abruptly left his wife and daughter in Denver and moved to a remote area of eastern Colorado. No one seemed to know why he had done so. He was said to be extremely distraught over the murder. He reportedly placed several frantic calls to friends, during which he expressed a profound fear for his life. He wrote an article for *Stagelines*, a pageant newsletter, in which he claimed that he was being pursued by "paramilitary types." He also expressed concern to the newsletter's publisher about the possibility of someone releasing "inappropriate" photos of JonBenét.

When the Wonderland raids swept through a number of American cities, one of those arrested was Richard Bruce Thomas, a computer consultant living in Ft. Collins, Colorado, about an hour's drive from the Ramsey home. Thomas was found shot to death in his home on September 5, 1998. His death was ruled, as always, a suicide. When a man named James Partin was arrested on charges of distributing child pornography on the Internet, his Columbus, Ohio home was found to contain a photograph of JonBenét Ramsey. Partin was a prime suspect in the 1983 disappearance of a fourteen-year-old girl from Idaho Springs, Colorado.

Stephan Singular took some of these scraps of evidence that he had collected and presented them to District Attorney Alex Hunter, and then to Detective Sergeant Tom Wickman of the Boulder Police Department, and then to Ellis

Armistead, one of the Ramseys' private investigators. All three took his information but offered nothing in return, and all three chose not to investigate the leads that he provided.

* * * * *

What could prove to be a key piece of evidence in the case has been largely ignored by the media and by various theories of the crime: the undigested food in JonBenét's stomach and small intestine, which indicated that the girl had eaten in fairly close proximity to her death.

According to the Ramseys' version of events, JonBenét had eaten earlier in the evening, while at the White's party, but she had not eaten at home before being put to bed, since she was, according to the Ramseys, already asleep. The existence of the largely undigested food matter has, therefore, never been satisfactorily explained. In fact, it has been almost entirely ignored by most theorists, although some have tried to explain it away with the theory that JonBenét's would-be abductor(s) fed her before killing her. Such theories require belief in the dubious notion that although the mysterious intruder(s) forgot to bring materials to write a ransom note (or an already prepared ransom note), they did remember to pack a snack for their abductee.

A more reasonable explanation for the undigested food is that JonBenét was killed shortly after she was known to have last eaten. She was, to be more specific, killed *before* the Ramsey family returned home from the party they had been attending. Such a scenario would help to explain some of the other facts and persistent rumors that have surrounded the case. For example, it was mentioned previously that JonBenét's body, despite being in the cold confines of the basement of the Ramsey home, had decomposed to the point of emitting a noticeable odor. It is unlikely that decomposition would have advanced to that stage had JonBenét been killed between 10:00 PM (when she was allegedly put to bed) and 5:00 AM (when her disappearance was allegedly discovered).

Some investigators believe that JonBenét's clothing was changed after her death. The Ramseys have acknowledged that she was in fact changed before being put to bed, after the family had returned home from the party. If she was already dead at that time, then she was indeed re-dressed after her murder. It is interesting to note here that in the Ramseys' own telling of the story, the limp figure of JonBenét was carried into the house upon the family's return home.

Some investigators also believe that some elements of the crime scene, particularly the ligatures, were staged. That is also consistent with the child having been killed elsewhere and then deposited in the basement. It is possible that the

ligatures were added after the fact, when it became apparent that it was not going to be possible to dispose of the body. It is also possible that the ligatures were an artifact of the party, necessarily loosened when the body was re-dressed, and then retied.

The claim by the California woman that there were numerous witnesses to the murder is also consistent with JonBenét having been killed at the party. One of those witnesses would have been sibling Burke, who some suspect witnessed or was involved to some degree in the killing. That would explain the Ramsey family's concerted efforts to shield the boy from the media and from inquisitive police (the Ramseys claim that the extraordinary security afforded Burke is intended to protect him from the still-at-large killer).

As a final note on the Ramsey case, John and Patsy have on occasion publicized the fact that a stun-gun was possibly used to incapacitate JonBenét prior to her death. That fact is supposed to bolster the intruder theory, since the Ramseys claim that they have never owned a stun-gun. One of the videotapes seized from their home, however, included instructions on how to use, of all things, a stun-gun.